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SUBJECT: LEBANON: PM SINIORA COMMENTS ON EU BORDER  
INITIATIVES, SAUDI DISCUSSIONS, AND UNGA

REF: BEIRUT 1220

Classified By: Ambassador Jeffrey D. Feltman for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)  
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SUMMARY

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11. (C) On the margins of a briefing on USG bilateral military aid (reftel), Prime Minister Siniora shared his concern that EU initiatives to protect the border with Syria could produce more harm than good. He is concerned that the Syrians will get credit for participating in an international initiative without actually having to change their disruptive behavior. He believes that "technical assistance" will not be enough and he prefers the "deployment of experts" as recommended by the Lebanon Independent Border Assessment Team (LIBAT). He denied that the Saudis had floated any new initiatives regarding the upcoming presidential elections and stated that he will "probably not" attend UNGA this year.  
End Summary.

Unenthusiastic Response to EU Border Initiative

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12. (C) Ambassador, ODC Chief and Special Assistant met with PM Siniora, Senior Advisor Mohammad Chatah and Advisor Rola Nouredine on August 9. The PM expressed concern about Spanish FM Moratinos's statements following a recent trip to Lebanon and Syria. The PM feels that the Syrians are being given the benefit of the doubt right now, in light of current talks about the Syria/Iraq border. Siniora feels that the existing EU proposals for the Lebanon/Syria border lack substance. Technical assistance is useful, but "more teeth" are needed to solve the current problems. The PM and Chatah both expressed their preference for the "deployment of experts" as outlined in the LIBAT report. Siniora has already consulted with President Mubarak and King Abdullah about perhaps using Arab troops or experts as part of the solution and he mentioned that King Abdullah had detailed ideas about how to make this work.

13. (C) The Prime Minister also believes that the recent parliamentary by-elections have influenced talks on border security. With two of the "kings" of the Lebanese political class (Aoun and Gemayel) knocked off by the recent election results, people are more willing to look forward to the upcoming presidential elections with a fresh perspective. Siniora believes that border security will become a debate topic for candidates and people will expect to hear proposals that can become part of a "global solution."

## No Saudi Electoral Initiatives

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¶4. (C) The Ambassador also asked if the Saudis had proposed any new initiatives regarding the upcoming presidential elections. Siniora stated that the Saudis agree that electing a president is a "must" and he said they have been very respectful of "our point of view." There is still talk about establishing a national unity government, the consistent position of the opposition, but Siniora said that a new president must be elected first. If this process goes smoothly and consensus is reached early, Siniora said he has no problem considering the question of a national unity government.

"Probably Not Going" to UNGA

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¶5. (C) PM Siniora said, at this point, he is probably not going to attend UNGA. He has no desire to compete with President Lahoud in that venue and said it would "just make things worse."

FELTMAN